

Sunny Khadjavi, daughter of a murder victim
Testifying in support of SB 280 to repeal the death penalty

It's been almost forty years since my father was murdered. While no one can *understand* why a loved one is murdered, the mystery surrounding my father's death has weighed heavily on me these many years. My father's case is a "cold case", meaning it hasn't been solved. In my father's case, and most cold cases, the police are no longer actively investigating the crime.

It is very difficult having a "cold case". Having some context as to how and why my father was taken from us would have helped me to process the horrifying loss. I'm left frustrated that when my father was murdered there were not enough resources and investigators available to sufficiently delve into my father's case. I'm not alone as a "cold case" survivor.

Recently, attention has been given to the nearly 900 cold cases in Connecticut that will not be actively investigated. There simply aren't the resources to ensure that each of these cases will be solved so the State's Prosecutor's office will not be taking on any more cases than the estimated 16-20 they are currently investigating. This breaks my heart for every one of these families. It frustrates me that we continue to spend millions of dollars every year on a death penalty system that affects so few families, while there are hundreds of people desperate for answers to very basic questions about their case.

There are clearly much better ways to use our finite resources than the death penalty.

While I still want to know more about why my father was killed, I have never imagined that finding the perpetrator and pursuing the death penalty would help me with my healing. The death penalty could not bring back my father.

What has helped, after all these years, is being able to share my story with others who really know what it means to lose a loved one to murder. Finding a safe place to remember my father, share my heartache, be supported, and provide support has been wonderful.

It has helped to surround myself with others who recognize that the death penalty fails murder victims' survivors by highlighting a few cases while so many have been stamped "cold", and are then all but forgotten.